

# The Importance of Preventive *Health*

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## About These Guidelines

The preventive guidelines cited in this newsletter are consistent with national recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the American College of Physicians.





# Be Prepared For Your Next Doctor Visit

Seeing your doctor for a yearly “well visit” or “physical” is important to maintaining good health. We have included important information about preventive health screenings in this newsletter. Please review this information, and feel free to bring it with you to discuss at your next doctor’s visit.

Preventive health visits provide a great opportunity for you and your doctor to discuss your personal health. Be proactive in your care and learn about ways to stay healthy.



Making healthy decisions and taking positive action regarding health, nutrition, relationships, exercise and lifestyle can lead to a better quality of life.



By leading a healthy lifestyle, you can control many of the health risk factors that lead to illness.

Here are some general guidelines for healthy living:

- ▶ Avoid all tobacco usage in any form
- ▶ Avoid alcohol or use in moderation
- ▶ Maintain a healthy weight and body mass index (BMI)
- ▶ Exercise regularly
- ▶ Eat a healthy diet

Even if you’re in the best shape of your life, some serious illnesses do not have obvious symptoms in the early stages, so it’s important to have regular preventive screenings in order to limit your risks.

See your health care provider. Discuss the recommended health screenings for your age and medical history.

Part of preventive health is learning to recognize changes in your body. Talk to your health care provider right away if you notice:

- ▶ A lump anywhere on your body
- ▶ You are losing weight without trying
- ▶ A lasting fever, even if it is a low temperature
- ▶ A cough that does not go away
- ▶ Body aches and pains that do not go away
- ▶ Changes or blood in your stools
- ▶ Skin changes or sores that itch, do not go away or get worse
- ▶ Other changes or symptoms that are new or do not go away

# Preventive Screenings



## Children

Make sure your child has the necessary screenings during the years of greatest growth.

- ▶ **Well Baby Exams:** Recommended from birth to age 2 (newborn, 3-5 days, 1 month, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24 and 30 months). At these visits your child's growth and development are monitored, and age appropriate health screenings and immunizations are administered.
- ▶ **Well Child Exams:** recommended every year for children ages 3 to 18. Growth and development are monitored continuously, as are blood pressure, body mass index, psychological assessments and the need for additional immunizations.
- ▶ **Lead Screening:** Whether your child needs to be tested depends in part on where you live, how old your housing is and other risk factors. Talk to your child's doctor about whether your child is at risk and should be screened. New York state requires health care providers to test all children for lead with a blood lead test at age 1 and again at age 2.

## Women

Ask about whether or not you are due for any of these preventive screenings during your next routine office visit with your health care provider.

- ▶ **Breast Cancer Screening:** Beginning at age 40, all women should discuss breast cancer screening with their doctor. Screening mammograms are the best way to detect cancer early, and many experts recommend that mammograms be done at least every two years for all women aged 40 and above.
- ▶ **Cervical Cancer (Pap test):** All women between the ages of 21 and 65 should have PAP smear/cervical cancer screening at least every three years. If you are 30 or older, you may choose to have an HPV test along with the Pap test. Both tests can be performed by your doctor at the same time. If your test results are normal, your chance of getting cervical cancer in the next few years is very low. Your doctor may then tell you that you can wait as long as five years for your next pap test, however continue regular checkups as your doctor recommends. More frequent testing based on your personal health history should be discussed with your doctor.
- ▶ **Chlamydial Infection Screening:** Recommended for sexually active women ages 24 and younger and other asymptomatic women (including pregnant women) at increased risk for infection.
- ▶ **Folic Acid Supplementation:** Recommended for all women capable of or planning a pregnancy.





# Preventive Screenings



## Adults

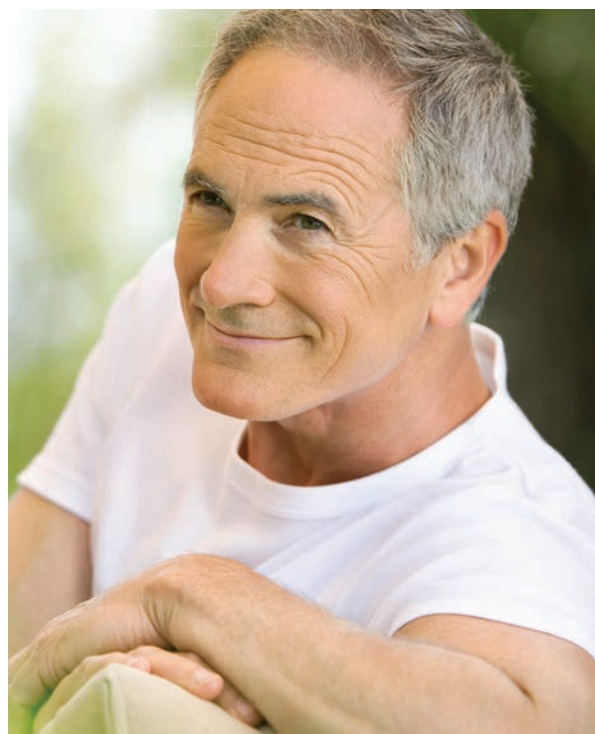
Ask about whether or not you are due for any of these preventive screenings during your next routine office visit with your health care provider.

- ▶ **Colorectal Cancer Screening:** recommended for adults ages 50 to 75 using fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.
- ▶ **Depression Screening:** We all feel sad or irritable from time to time. If you feel this way every day for more than two weeks, talk to your health care provider. It may be more than “the blues.” *You can feel better.*
- ▶ **Tobacco Use and Tobacco-Caused Disease, Counseling and Interventions Screening:** Counseling and Interventions Screening - if you smoke, the greatest single thing you can do to improve your health is to quit. Over time, your lungs can actually clean themselves. Ask your doctor about programs to help you stop smoking.
- ▶ **HIV Screening:** Recommended for all adolescents and adults at increased risk for HIV infection and all pregnant women.
- ▶ **Sexually Transmitted Infections, Counseling:** Recommended for all sexually active individuals at increased risk for sexually transmitted infections, including pregnant women.

## Seniors

In addition to the adult screenings listed previously in this newsletter, seniors should talk to their doctor about these preventive measures.

- ▶ **Glaucoma Test:** Includes a dilated eye exam that can detect problems before vision is impaired.
- ▶ **Diabetes Screenings:** Important for people who have any of the following risk factors: high blood pressure (hypertension), history of abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels (dyslipidemia), obesity or a history of high blood sugar (glucose).
- ▶ **Bone Mass Measurements:** Helps determine if you are at risk for broken bones. Talk to your doctor about your risk for osteoporosis and ask if a bone density test might be right for you.



# Immunization Update

The following vaccines are especially important to consider. The information is based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information and a complete listing of recommended vaccines visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>.

**▶ Tdap** Tdap is a vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). Immunity to whooping cough wears off over time, so one dose of Tdap is recommended for those ages 11 to 64 to replace one TD dose. It is also recommended for people older than age 65 if they are in contact with infants under age 1.

In response to a recent spike in the number of pertussis cases, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that women get a booster dose of Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy, preferably after 20 weeks gestation, regardless of previous Tdap history. If not administered during pregnancy, Tdap should be administered immediately postpartum.

**▶ HPV** HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine is important because it can help prevent cases of cervical cancer in females if given before exposure to the virus. It may be given to males and females. It is recommended to be given starting at approximately age 11 years, and can be administered up to age 26 years. Talk to your child's doctor about your child having the HPV vaccine.

**▶ Meningococcal** Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness. Meningitis is an infection of the covering of the brain and the spinal cord. Adolescents and those with certain health conditions should be routinely immunized with the meningitis vaccine. Speak with your health care provider to learn more about this important vaccine.

**▶ Flu** Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone older than 6 months. For best results, children aged 6 months through 8 years require a second dose four weeks after the initial dosage during the first season only.

**▶ Pneumonia** Infants, very young children and older persons are at highest risk for complications from pneumonia. It is recommended that those with chronic health conditions receive a pneumonia vaccine. Talk to your doctor about the benefit of a pneumonia vaccine.

## Know Your Numbers:

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to "Know your Numbers." The following list shows the national recommendations for certain critical health indicators.

### Blood Pressure:

Ideal is 120/80mm/Hg or lower

### Fasting Blood Glucose:

Less than 100 mg/dL

### Total Cholesterol:

Less than 200mg/dL

- HDL (good) Cholesterol:

Greater than 40 mg/dL

- LDL (bad) Cholesterol:

Less than 100 mg/dL

### Triglycerides:

Less than 150mg/dL

### Waist Size:

Men – less than 40 inches;

women – less than 35

inches

### Body Mass Index:

Less than 25



# Understanding High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

High blood pressure is a serious condition. About one in three adults has high blood pressure, but many are unaware because most people have no symptoms. Blood vessels can be damaged, which may lead to heart and kidney disease. Effects of high blood pressure can last a lifetime.

Blood pressure is measured as systolic (sis-TOL-ik) and diastolic (di-a-STOL-ik) pressures. "Systolic" refers to the

amount of pressure the heart has to push against the arteries during each heartbeat. "Diastolic" refers to the amount of pressure that remains when the heart is between beats. You will see blood pressure numbers written with the systolic number above or before the diastolic number, such as 120/80 mmHg.

Knowing your blood pressure numbers is important, even when you're feeling

well. Blood pressure doesn't stay the same all the time. It changes with activity and sleep, when you're excited or anxious. Health problems can develop if your numbers stay above normal most of the time. High blood pressure is usually discovered through a routine office visit. Untreated high blood pressure can lead to heart failure, stroke and kidney disease.

To control your blood pressure, eat healthy meals that are low in salt, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly and limit your alcohol consumption to two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

If your numbers fall into different categories, consider yourself to be in the more severe category. For example, a blood pressure of 138/75 would be categorized as pre-hypertension.

Be aware if your numbers are in the pre-hypertension category. Early diagnosis, along with lifestyle changes, can help delay or prevent the progression to hypertension.

## Categories for Blood Pressure Levels in Adults (measured in millimeters of mercury, or mmHg)

Category	Systolic		Diastolic
Normal	lower than 120	OR	lower than 80
Pre-hypertension	120-139	OR	80-89
Hypertension	Stage 1: 140 – 159	OR	90-99
	Stage 2: 160 or higher	OR	100 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis	greater than or equal to 180		greater than or equal to 110

## Antibiotic Use



One of the world's most critical public health threats is the reduced effectiveness of antibiotics. Viruses cause colds and many other upper respiratory infections, including bronchitis. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Using antibiotics when not necessary can lead to antibiotic resistance; this occurs when antibiotics can no longer cure the bacterial infections for which they are intended.

If your health care provider determines that antibiotics are necessary, be sure to complete the full treatment. Do not stop when you begin to feel better, which helps to make the bacteria resistant and less effective.



# Nutrition

Eating well is important at all ages. Whatever your age, your daily food choices can make a big difference in your health and how you look and feel.

To eat well, it's best to choose a mix of nutrient-dense foods every day. Nutrient-dense foods are foods that are high in nutrients but low in calories. Look for foods that contain vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates, lean proteins and healthy fats.

Planning ahead can help you choose healthy foods when you shop. It can also help you get the most for your money. Plan your meals and snacks to include:

- ▶ Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Plenty of grains, especially whole grains
- ▶ Low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products
- ▶ Lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts
- ▶ Limited amounts of fats (saturated and *trans* fats should be as low as possible), cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars.



## Understanding Metabolic Syndrome



Metabolic syndrome is a name given to a group of risk factors that increase your chance of having heart disease or diabetes. Doctors may say you have metabolic syndrome when three or more of the following are found:

- ▶ Your blood pressure is equal to or higher than 130/85mmHg and/or you take medicine to treat high blood pressure
- ▶ Your fasting blood sugar is equal to or higher than 100mg/dL (a fasting blood sugar is when a blood sample is taken before you eat foods or drink liquids except water)
- ▶ You have a large waist- this is the measure around your belly (large waist in men is 40 inches or greater; women 35 inches or greater)
- ▶ You have low HDL (good) cholesterol- or you take medicine to treat low HDL (HDL is considered low for men when it is under 40mg/dL and women when under 50mg/dL)
- ▶ Your triglycerides are equal to or greater than 150mg/dL or you take medicine to treat high triglycerides

Work with your doctor or health care provider to check and lower your blood pressure, blood sugar and LDL cholesterol. Together, you can improve your health.

**CDC:** [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/resources/preventative\\_screening.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/resources/preventative_screening.htm)

**American Academy of Pediatrics:** <http://www.aap.org/en-us/search/pages/results.aspx?k=prevention>

**American Academy of Family Physicians (for patients):** <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness.html>

**American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:**

<http://www.acog.org/For%20Patients.aspx>

**USPSTF:** <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/recommendations.htm>

**American College of Physicians:** [http://www.acponline.org/fcgi/search?q=prevention&site=ACP\\_Online](http://www.acponline.org/fcgi/search?q=prevention&site=ACP_Online)



## Help In Managing Your Health

We offer many programs that can help you stay healthy. If you are sick, we can help manage your condition so that you can focus more on getting healthier. We work closely with you and your doctor to make sure you get the information and services you need. We provide useful information through one-on-one phone calls and special mailings. If you would like to find out more about our programs, call our Member Care Management team at 1-800- 860-2619. The TTY number is 1-800-421-1220. Team up with us to get the most out of your health!

To learn more about how we can help you stay healthy, call our Member Care Management Team at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield 1-800-860-2619. The TTY number is 1-800-421-1220.

For any customer service questions regarding a new insurance card or a benefit inquiry, please call the phone number listed for you on the back of your insurance card.

## Staying healthy

takes work, but you are not alone. Our team of health care professionals is here to help you live the healthiest, happiest life possible. We can provide you with information about how to avoid the most common health conditions affecting Americans today. We can send you reminders so that you don't get behind in your preventive screenings. We have resources on our website to help you learn about more than 6,000 health topics. We offer 24/7 health coaching by phone in case you need to talk to someone immediately about a health question or concern. Our health coaching number is 1-800-348-9786. The TTY number is 1-800-421-1220.

**Together,  
we're better.**